



UF/IFAS: Josh Wickham

The yellow rat snake is not venomous, but it may bite if handled.

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Larry Arrington, Dean. (DH191)

## Safety Precautions with Snakes

### Safety Precautions

Following floods, storms, and hurricanes, snakes are often forced into places where they are not usually found. If you live in an area where poisonous snakes are common, take the following precautions:

- Know how to identify poisonous snakes common to your area.
- Be alert for snakes in unusual places. They may be found in or around homes, barns, outbuildings, driftwood, leaves, dikes, dams, stalled automobiles, piles of debris, building materials, trash or any type of rubble or shelter.
- Before beginning any clean-up or rescue operations, search the premises thoroughly for snakes. They may be under or near any type of protective cover.
- In rescue or clean-up operations, wear heavy leather or rubber high-topped boots and heavy gloves. Wear trouser legs outside boots. Be extremely careful around debris. Use rakes, pry bars or other long-handled tools when removing debris. Never expose your hands, feet or other parts of your body in a place where a snake might be.
- After dark, carry a strong light.
- Explain to children the dangers of snakes under storm or flood conditions and the precautions they should follow. Do not allow children to play around debris.
- If you kill a venomous snake, use a stick, rake or other long-handled tool to carry the snake away for disposal. Do not use your hands.
- Snakes may bite even when they appear dead.
- If you realize you are near a snake, avoid sudden movement. Sudden movements may cause the snake to strike. If you remain still, the snake may leave. If the snake doesn't move away from you after a few minutes, slowly back away from it.

- If someone is bitten by a venomous snake, call 9-1-1 immediately.

## Controlling Snakes

To get rid of snakes in buildings and to prevent others from entering:

- Remove snakes' food supply. Eliminating rats and mice from an area will often discourage snakes.
- Remove snakes' hiding places. Get rid of lumber piles, trash piles, high weeds and grasses, and debris.
- Block openings where snakes might enter buildings. Snakes can pass through extremely small openings and usually enter near or below ground level.
  - Be sure doors, windows and screens fit tightly.
  - Search walls and floors for holes or crevices.
  - Inspect the masonry of foundations, fireplaces and chimneys; plug or cement cracks.
  - Plug spaces around pipes that go through outside walls.
  - Fasten galvanized screen over drains or ventilators or over large areas of loose construction.

## Releasing or Handling Snakes: The Legal Angle

**Non-Venomous Snakes** — No permit is required to relocate non-venomous snakes. Release them in your yard or in a nearby wooded area. Non-venomous snakes are generally beneficial and help to control insect and rodent populations.

**Venomous Snakes** — Do not attempt to handle venomous snakes. You must have a permit from the Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to handle or transport venomous snakes. Contact a licensed wildlife removal specialist to capture, remove and/or transport any venomous snake.

**Non-native Snakes** — It is illegal to release any species of wildlife that is not native to Florida, and this includes pythons, boas, and all other non-native snakes. Again, it is best to call a licensed wildlife removal specialist to deal with any nuisance wildlife in your home.

## For More Information...

- Locate a Nuisance Wildlife Trapper: [http://myfwc.com/license\\_permit/NuisWild.aspx](http://myfwc.com/license_permit/NuisWild.aspx)
- Learn to identify Florida snakes: <http://flmnh.ufl.edu/herpetology/FL-GUIDE/onlineguide.htm>
- Identify Florida's venomous snakes: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW229>